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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
5 April 1975

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Indochina
(As of 1600 EST)
No. 3

SOUTH VIETNAM

Military Action in Delta

1. There were no major attacks against cities in the delta, but the level of Communist and government initiatives in the countryside continues to increase. Regional Force units successfully defended a district town in Vinh Long Province, scattering the attackers in disarray and pursuing them until dark. Government territorials also reopened the road northeast of the Kien Giang Province capital of Rach Gia, which had been cut yesterday.

2. The regional staff members seem convinced that the North Vietnamese 4th Division, which has concentrated its regiments near Can Tho City, must soon make its move or risk losing its combat effectiveness. Some officials feel that if the 4th Division has not made a successful bid against the Can Tho defenses by April 8, it will have to fall back. Although the South Vietnamese 21st Division has not been aggressive in breaking up the Communist threat, there has been constant contact, and air and artillery strikes have been conducted daily. Delta officials believe that these strikes take a considerable toll in men and supplies and this pressure will force the Communists either to attack soon or to disengage.

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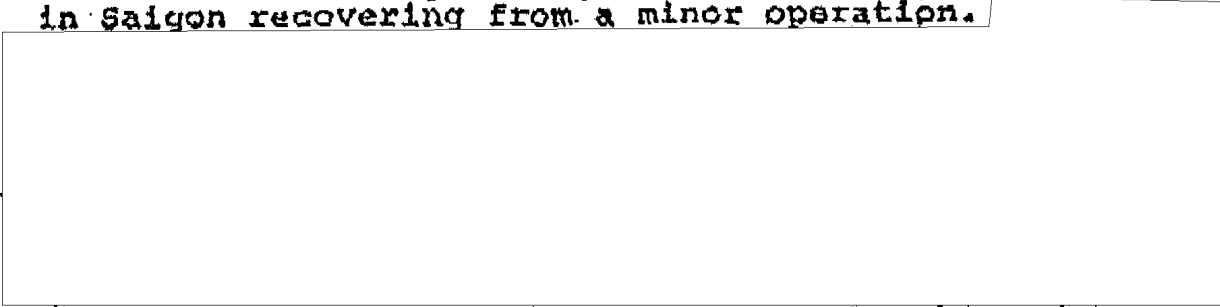
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Regional Commanders Indisposed

3. General Ngo Quang Truong is in the hospital in Saigon recovering from a minor operation.



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4. General Pham Van Phu, the former commander of MR-2, is also in a Saigon hospital, reportedly suffering from nervous tension. Following a speech by President Thieu yesterday, associates of Phu expressed concern that the general may be punished. Thieu said that some military commanders were partly to blame for the debacle of recent weeks. He is upset with what he considers premature decisions by both Truong and Phu to abandon their regions.

Initial Reactions to New Cabinet Formation

5. In a limited sampling of Vietnamese reaction to the formation of a new cabinet, the US embassy reports that most of those interviewed are taking a wait and see attitude. They welcomed the departure of Prime Minister Khieu but questioned whether Speaker Can is capable of the difficult task Thieu has assigned him. Although Can is a respected and intelligent politician, he is a close associate of Thieu and has few contacts among the military. As a national leader, most regard him as a lightweight and they question whether he can persuade an impressive group to join the government.

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CAMBODIAThe Tactical Situation

1. Fighting has increased on the Route 5 front some six miles north of Phnom Penh. US defense attaches who visited the area reported that the situation is under control for the moment but that government defenses along the highway and on the peninsula just across the Tonle Sap River are very porous. Just to the west, government units that had earlier evacuated an isolated headquarters well removed from the main battlefields have moved into blocking positions along the dike five miles from Pochentong Airport. Government commanders are pulling units in from enclaves in the countryside and by next week may have several thousand additional troops to reinforce the capital's northwestern defenses.

2. Southwest of Phnom Penh, the threat of a major push against the capital is growing daily.

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Yesterday, however, the Khmer air force destroyed a large number of sampans on the lower Mekong River which were presumably being used to ferry the division across the river. This may delay the division's attack plans.

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3. Communist gunners today fired about 50 rockets and howitzer rounds into Pochentong Airport. Four Khmer air force pilots were wounded and three air force transports were damaged. Only four T-28s were available for combat support today and the air force may soon be limited to a transport role. The US airlift continued without interruption today.

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Evacuation Status

4. By nightfall on Sunday (Phnom Penh time), Ambassador Dean plans to have reduced the US Mission staff to 61 persons or less.

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5. Ambassador Dean has reported that in addition to the official members of the US Mission, there were another 135 US citizens in Phnom Penh as of this morning. These include some 50 "transients," 49 Americans who are teachers, missionaries, or employees of airlines and relief organizations; and 36 members of the press corps. Many of these have apparently been reluctant to leave.

6. Only two foreign diplomats remain on the evacuation list as of today but there are 30 non-official third country nationals. The ambassador is deeply concerned over the more than 800 Cambodians included in the evacuation plan. He believes that the departure of large numbers of government officials and Cambodian employees of the US Mission--along with their dependents--will be read as a sign of defeat in Phnom Penh. As a result an unpredictable and uncontrollable situation might develop which could make it difficult or impossible to carry the evacuation plans through to completion.

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SECRETPolitical Developments

7. The Thai government is apparently making an eleventh hour effort to spark a dialogue between the two Cambodian belligerents. Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai told US Charge Masters in Bangkok yesterday that he had invited Sihanouk's son, Prince Yuvaneath, to visit the Thai capital over the week-end. Cambodian Prime Minister Long Boret is scheduled to pass through Bangkok on Sunday and Chatchai apparently hopes to arrange a meeting between the two.

8. Even if the Thais succeed in bringing the two Cambodians together, there is very little hope that such a meeting would result in any significant movement toward a peaceful settlement. Prince Yuvaneath--who has a reputation as a playboy and who has been staying in Macao--is clearly not authorized to speak for his father, let alone the Khmer Communists. Recent statements from both Sihanouk and the Communists have made it clear that they sense victory and are even more firmly opposed than in the past to "negotiations or compromise."

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EXCLUSIVE FOR: THE WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM
DEPARTMENT OF STATE, Mr. Habib,
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ANNEX

to

The Situation in Indochina
No. 3

1. The attitudes of South Vietnam's military leaders will of course be crucial in determining the government's and Thieu's durability. Former prime minister Khiem's actions will also be important. Although there are no reliable indications so far that senior military leaders or Khiem--a former military commander and by rank South Vietnam's senior general--are ready to move against Thieu, the feeling seems to be growing that Thieu should step aside.

2. South Vietnam's press director, Nguyen Ngoc Bich, told a US official this morning that reaction to President Thieu's speech yesterday among "many Air Force officers" was one of extreme anger and that there was talk of a "bloody solution" to the removal of Thieu. Bich interpreted these comments to mean that a bombing of the palace or an assassination attempt might be made shortly. He claimed that "all armed forces" were now beginning to rally around former Vice President Ky, but that Ky himself was not among those who were plotting violence. Bich also stated that Military Region 3 commander General Toan had been trying unsuccessfully all day to get an appointment with Thieu. Toan reportedly wants to assure Thieu of his personal loyalty but intends nevertheless to ask him to step down for the good of the country.

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